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Socialist General Election Address: June 2017

What They Offer

What do the main political parties of capitalism offer the working class?

The Tories – political leader, Theresa May. Manifesto - a class-divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

The Labour Party – political leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Manifesto - a class-divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

The Green Party – political leader, Jonathan Bartley. Manifesto - a class-divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

The Liberal Democrat Party – political leader, Tim Farron. Manifesto - a class- divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) – political leader, Paul Nuttall. Manifesto - a class-divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

Plaid Cymru– political leader, Leanne Wood. Manifesto - a class-divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

The Scottish National Party – political leader, Nichola Sturgeon. Manifesto - a class-divided society and the continuation of class exploitation

From the perspective and interest of the working class majority; the parties of capitalism offer, in their respective Manifestoes, exactly one and the same the same policy: administrating capitalism in the interest of the capitalist class.

What Socialists offer

The socialist election address is different from the ones advertised above by the capitalist political parties. There are three reasons why:

1). The Reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain (1991) has no leaders, so we do not ask you to vote for politicians to do your thinking for you. Political leadership is a capitalist concept not a socialist one.

We take political action around a clearly defined socialist object and set of eight principles which are reproduced on the inside cover of our quarterly magazine, SOCIALIST STUDIES and on our web site. Our *Principles* describe what capitalism is, what are its inherent and insoluble defects and why and how workers should consciously and politically join together to end capitalism.

Unlike the Labour Party and other reformist political parties, socialists ask the working class to consider World Socialism as a practical and feasible alternative to World Capitalism.

We ask workers to think for themselves in line with their own class interests, to stand on their own two feet and refuse their consent to vote for capitalist politicians whose subsequent government will be another five years of capitalism and wage slavery.

2). The political language socialists use is different from the parties of capitalism. We do not talk about wanting to remain in the European Union any more than we talk about wanting to leave the European Union. The question of the EU was never of interest to the working class.

We do not talk about “*taxing the rich*” like some latter-day Robin Hood but instead we want to see the abolition of capitalism altogether.

And we do not talk about “*strong and stable leadership in the national interest*” as though we are all in it together. We are not. Workers get austerity the capitalist class get unimaginable wealth. We do not talk about “*social justice*” and “*fairness*” because capitalism is incapable of being “*fair*” and “*just*”.

Nor do we talk about “*The country coming together*”. The country is divided into competing and diametrically opposite classes with their own distinct interest; exploiting and resisting exploitation. In fact, the working class has no country. Instead, socialists talk about class, a class divided society, opposing class interests and class struggle.

We talk about the capitalist class who live on the unearned income of rent, interest and profit and the working class who form the majority of society. Unlike the capitalist class, workers do not own the means of production and distribution but are forced to sell their ability to work to employers for a wage and salary.

We talk about how the capitalist class own the raw materials, communication and transport, factories and offices and distribution networks to the exclusion of the majority of society. And we talk about how the workers are exploited in the production process producing more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries.

And we talk of socialist revolution. We talk of the need for a revolutionary politics. And we talk of a society without markets, without commodity production and exchange for profit, without classes just an association of free men and women. We talk of the socialist alternative.

3). Socialists do not offer workers “*a higher minimum wage*”, “*nationalisation of the railway system*”, or “*more money for the NHS*”. Social reforms do not prevent or resolve the social and economic problems faced on a daily basis by the working class. Social reforms are enacted with no guarantee that later on they will be either watered down or taken away again.

Many social reforms have unintended consequences and make the position of workers worse not better. As long as workers give their vote to capitalist political parties the problems workers face will continue from one generation to the next. The profit system causes poverty and insecurity for the majority alongside luxury and power for the few.

Some workers agree with the socialist analysis of capitalism. They agree that it is a system of class exploitation and that the parties of capitalism exist only to serve the interest of the capitalism class. There is real class poverty. There is real class inequality. And capitalism creates the problems we face as a class. However, what is to be done about it? What is the alternative?

The Socialist Alternative

For the working class – the world's working class – the only alternative to capitalism is socialism. Socialism has never existed. And socialism does not exist anywhere in the world today; not in Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea. Socialism only exists when a socialist majority actively, politically and democratically organise to establish a class-free system of production and distribution.

Socialism will be a society in which the whole community will own the means of production and distribution. There will be no classes or class division because the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned and under democratic control.

There will be no leaders in socialism but instead a free association of men and women democratically deciding how society should be organised without deferring to power and privilege. Production for profit will give way to production solely and directly for human need. Goods will be produced and freely available for people to take according to their needs. Work will be carried out on the basis of free co-operation not the coercion of the wages system.

Capitalism has a history. It has not existed forever. And it can be replaced but only by the formation of a socialist majority, the revolutionary use of the vote and the sending of socialist delegates to Parliament to gain control of the machinery of government, including the armed forces. For the working class majority, only socialism is the alternative to capitalism with its anarchy of production, periodic economic crises and stagnation, poverty, war and suffering.

The vote workers have is like a double edged sword. The vote can be used to cut their own throats or to free them from capitalist exploitation. The revolutionary use of the vote means using democratic political power of the majority to achieve the socialist object:- the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

SOME THOUGHTS FOR TRADE UNIONISTS AT TOLPUDDLE

Organisation in trade unions has long been of value to the workers and will remain so while capitalism lasts, but it is an illusion to suppose that Trade unions can end class exploitation and the capitalist system. The right to with-hold their labour-power or ability to work in conjunction with their fellow workers became an essential means of resistance. Without the strike-weapon, the workers would have been crushed beyond power of recovery. From the outset, however, the trade unions found arrayed against them, not only the individual employers or groups with whom they were directly struggling, but the forces of the entire capitalist class as represented by the State.

The petty economic antagonism existing between the wage workers and farmers must be overcome by well applied thought and revolutionary enthusiasm, for these antagonisms are part and parcel of the contradictory nature of capitalism and must be understood as such. The giant machines must be made servants of mankind and no longer remain like-robbing agents of a few slothful and callous idlers (From: "The Slave of the Farm", Socialist Party of Canada).

The employers have much larger finances at their disposal than have the trade unions, and can afford to stand out longer if the unions seek to prolong a strike. It follows that a stoppage must not be allowed to drag on indefinitely. If it does not affect its purpose in a short sharp action it will have failed, and the workers must accept the inevitable for the present, for example, the strike of the miners in 1926 from May to November, when in addition to having lost seven months' pay, they had to accept worse terms than they could have had at the outset.

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Don't Blame The Workers

It is easy to become frustrated at the slow progress of socialist development and blame the working class. It is true that most workers presently show little political interest in socialist ideas and are content to periodically vote for the retention of wage slavery and class exploitation. Acting against their own class interests, workers vote for political leaders, well-meaning or not.

Few workers have time for political engagement. A midwife working a twelve hour shift just wants to come home and go to bed for twelve hours (www.rcm.org.uk/news-views-and-analysis/news/12-hour-shifts-friend-or-foe)' Raising children – future wage-slaves- is time consuming and leaves little time for politics. Even students are pressurised into long hours of study to meet the demands of the job market. To carve out time for socialist political activity is difficult but not impossible.

It takes great effort and sacrifice to take part in socialist politics. And when socialists do discuss socialism with family, friends and work colleagues the time allowed to get across a socialist idea or to explain what socialism means – or does not mean – is limited to minutes.

It is very easy to become dispirited and cynical. However, the transmission of the case for socialism and dissemination of socialist ideas does not depend on the work of a few socialists scattered across the world.

Capitalism causes the class struggle between capitalists and workers; employers and employees. Capitalists exploit workers and workers have to resist. Moreover, capitalism creates socialists: it creates dissent, questioning and socialist politics. Socialist ideas persist from one generation of the working class to the next because capitalism creates social and economic problems which face the working class on a day-to-day basis; unemployment, poverty and war.

These social and economic problems are immune from social reforms and the actions of capitalist politicians and governments. Socialism is always and everywhere a practical and reasonable alternative to the failure of capitalism. And then there is the powerful capitalist media which drowns the working class in pro-capitalist and anti-socialist propaganda on a daily basis. Pro-capitalist bias in the media unites journalists at the NEW YORKER and FINANCIAL TIMES with journalists on the NATIONAL ENQUIRER and the SUN. It makes no difference now that the web allows billions to produce their own media when the internet platforms like the BBC with its millions of hits are essentially pro-capitalist and pro-market.

The other problem facing socialists is the failure of what is perceived to be socialism; the “socialism” of the former Soviet Union and the failure of the pre- Blair “*Socialist*” Labour Party. And socialism is still a contested term with dozens of web sites describing themselves as socialist pumping out propaganda for the discredited ideas of Lenin and Trotsky, on the one hand, and Jeremy Corbyn on the other.

It is all a political mess and it is quite understandable that many workers are confused, uninterested and turned-off by politics, socialist or otherwise. However it is not the fault of workers. Workers are not to blame. In fact, to blame non-socialist workers with for the reason why the socialist movement is currently running at a trickle is to bring in a moralising element to socialist propaganda which should not be there. If the current political atmosphere is so anti-socialist as a result of the Bolsheviks and their supporters, the Labour Party and the capitalist media, why blame the working class?

World socialism can only be established consciously and politically by a world-wide socialist majority. This is hard and repetitive work. After all, it is a political class struggle. And we are up against a very artful media and clever politicians who are astute at dividing the working class against itself, whether it be over the question of age, gender, sexuality and ‘*welfare benefits*’.

Taking a historical view of working class development, we can be positive and optimistic. Over the last three centuries of class struggle the working class has been able to establish trade unions and a socialist party around a set of socialist principles and a socialist object. It is the normal workings of capitalism which makes workers interested in socialist ideas although not enough in number to politically worry those who politically look after and further the interests of the capitalist class. However, our time will come. Capitalism will not leave the working class alone; workers will eventually have to learn from past mistakes. Socialists should be optimistic about the future and not go down the dead-end politics of blaming the working class.

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“*Utopia For Realists*” Or Practical Socialism?

Every so often, a “*great thinker*” comes onto the public stage to offer their solution to where we have all gone wrong and what to do about it. A couple of decades back it was Will Hutton (THE STATE WE'RE IN) with his raft of social reforms to save capitalism, more recently it has been the French economist, Tomas Piketty (CAPITAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY), and now it is the turn of the Dutch academic, Rutger Bregman with his book: UTOPIA FOR REALISTS: AND HOW WE CAN GET THERE (2017).

So what is Bregman’s menu of social reforms, how are they going to be enacted and who is going to enact them? He argues:

- * for a universal basic income
- * against using GDP as a measure of a country’s health
- * in favour of eliminating national borders
- * against foreign aid
- * for the abolition of poverty
- * for a fifteen hour working week
- * for governments to raise taxes with a “world-wide progressive tax on wealth” as suggested by Tomas Piketty.

Bregman wants a universal basic income but is aware of the failure of those proposing such schemes in the past, from the Speenhamland system introduced in the 18th century to the proposals put forward by Richard Nixon in the 1970’s, who tried unsuccessfully to implement this reform.

A universal basic income, even if it were enacted, would not solve the problems facing the working class. The working class are exploited within the production process by producing, what Marx called “*surplus value*”, and what workers receive in wages and salaries is never enough for them to lead decent and worthwhile lives. The capitalist class needs to keep the workers poor to be able to force workers to sell their labour power or ability to work on the labour market.

This also applies to reducing employment time to fifteen hour weeks. Capitalists want to employ workers for as long as they can in order to increase the intensity and extent of exploitation. They want workers to work as much surplus labour time as possible. What they do not want is to pay for workers to have more and more leisure time - when it is not profitable to employ them!

Socialists also want to see the abolition of poverty. Poverty for socialists, though, is defined by workers not only being exploited in the wages system but by not owning the means of production and distribution. Workers are poor because they cannot just take what they need or use the means of production and distribution under capitalism for social use. The means of production under capitalism are used to make a profit and nothing else.

The social reform measures put forward by Rutger, even if they were enacted by a benign government, would still leave the workers as an exploited class living in poverty. This is because of the existence of the exploitive class relationship between workers and capitalists with its in-built inequalities. And Rutger does not learn from history.

The failure of social reform parties, like the Labour Party, to make any appreciable difference to the condition of the working class, supports the socialist case against capitalism that, so long as the profit system is accepted by workers as a necessity, it can only be run in the interests of the capitalist class, and not the workers.

We now come onto Bregman’s utopianism. Yes, socialists would like to see the elimination of national borders. We want to see a world-wide socialist system without the artificial barriers to the movement of people across the planet. However, this will not happen under capitalism. Capitalism is split into competing nation states which is the cause of war and conflict. Bregman’s apparent failure to understand this is just naïve utopianism.

As for the suggestion of a “*world-wide progressive tax on wealth*”; just who is going to enact this legislation? Even

Piketty thought it highly unlikely. Governments exist, not for the benefit of all society, but to further the interest of the capitalist class, particularly protecting their means of production and distribution, to the exclusion of the rest of society.

Capitalists want taxes as low as possible and for the state to represent them and them alone. That is why they bankroll capitalist political parties, buy newspapers and other media outlets in order to spread pro-capitalist propaganda and wine and dine capitalist politicians.

Finally, socialists also have no interest in GDP and agree with Rutger that it can never measure a country's health. But a country is not what socialists are interested in. We want the resources of the world to be within the parameters of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. And that means World socialism. The "*health*" of socialism would be measured by the introduction of production solely for use to enable men and women to flourish and take part in the democratic affairs of society. Capitalism, whether in a block of countries or as an isolated country cannot provide the basis for universal health and well-being.

Bregman's believes he is a '*realist*' – don't all reformists? He is also utterly opposed to socialists and socialism. He uses the derogatory term "*under-dog socialism*" to describe those socialists who apparently believe that:

"...the neo-liberals have mastered the game of reason, judgement, and statistics, leaving the left with emotion" (p. 256).

Of course, Bregman constructs a "*straw socialist*"; a myth which can be easily knocked down. Socialists might put the socialist case with passion but it is backed-up by reason and empirical evidence. The case for socialism is not based on emotion or morals. The case for socialism is that capitalism is incapable of meeting the needs of all society. It is, as Marx noted is "*a fetter on production*" (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO): historically bankrupt and is now an unnecessary impediment preventing a society of abundance from replacing it.

Bregman cannot engage in debate with socialists. And for a very good reason, as acknowledged by Engels in SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC. Engels made this point against idealists and utopians in his own day but applicable to Bregman. Engels, said of the plans put forward by speculative utopians that they represented nothing more than:

"... a mish-mash allowing of the most manifold shades of opinion: a mish-mash of such critical statements, economic theories, pictures of future society by the founders of different sects, as excite a minimum of opposition; a mish-mash which is the more easily brewed the more definite sharp edges of the individual constituents are rubbed down in the stream of debate, like rounded pebbles in a brook".

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/>

The more Bregman's social reforms are interrogated to reasonable and analytical criticism the more they assume the shape of "*rounded pebbles in a brook*". He is no '*realist*' just a misplaced utopian; the type of social reformer going all the way back to Robert Owen who, in his own day, found that those in power had no intention of enacting his social reforms, no matter how reasonable or efficient they happened to be.

Finally, Bregman believes that ideas can change the world. Indeed they can, but only under the right historical, political and social circumstances.

What of socialist ideas? Here are a few:

- * From each according to their ability to each according to their need;
- * Abolition of buying and selling, money and money;
- * The proletariat alone is the real revolutionary force of social change;
- * The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority;
- * Socialism as an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all;

Socialist ideas, formed out of the class struggle, are important but unless subscribed to by a majority of the working class these ideas are going to do nothing. There is a relationship between ideas, consciousness and political action. Ideas, although important, by themselves do nothing.

Socialist ideas need a revolutionary force behind them to become practical in the sense of changing society in a revolutionary way; and that practical force is a socialist majority. To end the problems described in Bregman's book requires conscious political action by socialists and the democratic capture of political power. All else is failure and utopianism.

FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON'S ADVICE TO PRESIDENT TRUMP

« ...If the United States abandons Vietnam, free Asia will abandon the United states, and the Pacific Ocean will become a Red Sea. The Chinese would have half the world's rubber and half the world's tea under their control (READERS DIGEST, January 1966)

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How Will Capitalism End?

How Will Capitalism End?

Capitalism is a social system in which the means of production and distribution is owned by a minority capitalist class to the exclusion of the working class majority. The aim of commodity production and exchange is not to meet human needs but solely for the purpose of capital accumulation and making a profit.

The vast majority of society - the working class- is forced to sell its ability to work as a commodity in exchange for a wages or salaries. Marx called this commodity "*labour-power*". In selling their labour power, workers are under the direction of employers to produce commodities to be sold at a profit.

At the heart of capitalism is the class struggle; "*the motor force of history*" (Marx). Employers are constantly trying to increase the intensity and extent of class exploitation with workers resisting as best they can, either individually or in trade unions. The class struggle is about the ownership of the means of production and distribution, what is produced, under what conditions and for whom.

Capitalists, as Marx showed, only have one anti-social objective; to accumulate capital and expand value. Capitalists force workers to work surplus labour time and create "*surplus value*", the source of the unearned income going to land lords, bankers and industrial capitalists. He wrote:

Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!... Accumulation for the sake of accumulation, production for the sake of production... (CAPITAL, VOLUME 1, Ch. XXIV p. 742 Penguin 1990)

The capitalist system drives the capitalist to accumulate capital, to re-invest and to create even more capital. Competition forces the capitalist to accumulate capital in order to survive as a capitalist. Capitalists have to destroy their competitors or be destroyed by them: "*One Capitalist kills many*", Marx wrote in the first volume of CAPITAL.

Capitalism also has a history. Capitalism came out of the revolutionary class struggle between the feudal order and the rising capitalist class. If capitalism has a history, if capitalism has a beginning then, surely, it must have an end in human history. No social system lasts forever. Other social systems – primitive communism, chattel slavery and feudalism have all come and gone - so how will capitalism end?

HOW WILL CAPITALISM END? (Verso 2016) is a question posed by Wolfgang Streeck, a German economic sociologist and emeritus director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne.

Professor Streeck writes:

“capitalism has always been an improbable social formation, full of conflicts and contradictions, therefore permanently unstable and in flux, conditional on historically contingent and precarious supportive as well as constraining events and institutions” (p 1).

Streeck believes that:

“... the tensions and contradictions” within capitalism “make for an ever-present possibility of structural breakdown and social crisis” (p. 2).

Theories of capitalism, according to Streeck, were always theories of crises not only in the writing of Marx and Engels but also Ricardo, Mill, Sombart, Keynes, Hilferding and Schumpeter. All expected that capitalism would cease to exist in their own life-time.

However it was only Marx and Engels looked to the working class as the political force to end capitalism and to be replaced by socialism. They wrote:

“Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie to-day, the proletariat is a really revolutionary class” (The COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

This important Marxian point is overlooked by Professor Streeck who goes on to write:

“Modern capitalism can be written as a succession of crises that capitalism survived only at the price of deep transformations of its economic and social institutions, saving it from bankruptcy in unforeseeable and often unintended ways” (p. 4)

Here, Streeck has in mind the work of Keynes and his GENERAL THEORY (1936), written in an attempt during the 1930's depression to *“save capitalism”*. At first, Keynesianism seemed superficially to work. British capitalism, helped by post-war reconstruction and the absence of Germany and Japan from the World market had low unemployment and high levels of growth, but the theory had no answers to rising inflation and the stagflation of the 1970's.

Economic theories to address the tensions and contradictions within capitalism just do not work and have very short life-spans. Now the Bank of England admits that it has no ability to predict future economic crises and can offer governments no economic policy or theory to prevent crises occurring (DAILY TELEGRAPH, 22nd February 2017). Markets fail, economic theories are next to useless and governments cannot prevent economic crises occurring.

Professor Streeck concludes:

“The fact that capitalism has until now managed to outlive all predictions of its impending death, need not mean that it will forever be able to do so; there is no inductive proof here, and we cannot rule out the possibility that, next time, whatever cavalry capitalism may require for its rescue may fail to show up”(p. 4).

Streeck is also a deeply pessimistic about the future direction of capitalism. He sees no evidence of the working class organising consciously and politically to establish socialism. Capitalism, he believes, has entered a period of *“deep indeterminacy... unexpected things can happen any time”* (p.12) with the consequence that:

The end of capitalism... can be imagined as a death from a thousand cuts (p. 13)

Really?

Is the working class cut-out for socialism?

There are few really new political ideas, however one really revolutionary idea was put forward by Marx. He said that:

“All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority”(COMUNIST MANIFESTO).

Of all Marx’s political idea this has been the one considered as an affront to intellectuals, from Kautsky and Lenin through to Professor Streeck.

Streeck believes that for capitalism to decline needs: *“no revolutionary alternative”* and *“no masterplan of a better society displacing capitalism”* (p. 13)

Instead of socialism there will be *“a lasting interregnum”*, a prolonged period of *“social entropy or disorder”* (p. 13).

So what does this *“interregnum”* – a term borrowed from the Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci - look like?

We know for Gramsci:

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear (THE PRISON NOTEBOOKS written between 1929 and 1935, English ed. Published 1971)

We can understand Gramsci’s pessimism as he was imprisoned and mistreated by Italian fascists, a chain of events that would result in his death in 1937. He also did not think the working class were cut out to establish socialism without the leadership of intellectuals like himself. Under the circumstances, his view of the world would have been bleak. His writings has all the negativity of Shakespeare’s Richard II waiting death at Pontefract Castle:

*Thoughts tending to ambition they do plot.
Unlikely wonders; how these vain weak nails
May tear a passage through the flinty ribs
Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls*

Professor Streeck has no excuse for his negativity. It is true that inductive reasoning cannot rule out the possibility that the trade cycle stops permanently at stagnation. However, Marx did not produce an inductive argument for the trade cycle. There was no *‘black swan’*. The problem of economic crises, for Marx, derived from the problems associated with the contradictions, tensions and dislocations of the capital accumulation process.

Streeck ignores Marx’s critique of political economy and offers no reason why Marx’s analysis of capitalism is wrong. All he can do is give a list of fourteen factors which he believes will create the conditions of capitalism’s permanent collapse:

- * Declining growth intensifying distributional conflict;
- * Rising inequality;
- * Vanishing macroeconomic manageability;
- * Increasing debt;
- * A pumped-up money supply;
- * Possibility of another economic breakdown;
- * End of post-war capitalism’s social progress;
- * Erosion of democracy and increasing oligarchic rule;
- * Inability of governments to limit the commodification of labour, nature and money;
- * Corruption;
- * Erosion of public infrastructures and collective benefits;
- * Continual commodification of non-market areas of social life;
- * Increasing Privatisation;

* Inability of the United Nations to build and maintain a stable global order;

However, there is no compelling reason why this list should be accepted as evidence of capitalism coming to a grinding halt. While there is, for example, increasing inequality, - the world's 10 richest billionaires, according to FORBES, own \$505 billion in combined wealth, a sum greater than the total goods and services most nations produce on an annual basis - there is, however, no associated declining growth (world growth was a sluggish 2.3% in 2016, according to the World Bank; but it was still growth not a tendency towards stagnation).

Can these fourteen factors really prevent the continuation of capital accumulation? There is nothing in this list which will bring to a halt the continued exploitation of the working class, the generation of surplus value and profit. In fact, some of the factors Streeck lists above, like rising inequaklity, might even lead to dissent, the questioning of capitalism and an increase in socialist consciousness and political action.

Part of Streeck's problem, like Lenin before him, is that he does not believe the working class is cut-out for socialism. He sees no successor to this moribund state of stagnation for he believes a divided and fractured world working class precludes "*the formulation of a coherent oppositional project, like socialism...*" (p.27). However, he offers no justification for this assertion. It is just stated. There is no compelling reason given.

It is true that Marx did not believe socialism was inevitable, as he considered the possibility of the: "*the collapse of the contending parties*" (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO). What this '*collapse*' entailed Marx did not say. Luxembourgh in the JUNIUS PAMPHLET (1916) also considered the possibility of "*socialism or barbarism*", a phrase mis-attributed to Engels. Luxembourgh, like Gramsci, wrote her pessimistic pamphlet while in prison at an acute time in capitalism's violent history.

Yet, in both cases the pessimism was misplaced. There was no "*Interregnum*" or "*barbarism*", just the continuation of capitalism in all its violent ugliness. Capitalism prevailed. Capitalism survived the First World War. Millions, it seems, can die in capitalism's wars. Despite massive death and destruction of human beings capitalism as an exploitative social system still has the capacity to just pass from one economic crisis to the next. And the 20th century showed just how barbaric capitalism can become without showing any signs of collapsing or permanent stagnation.

Despite an earlier comment in the Communist Manifesto about the mutual destruction of the contending classes, Marx still remained optimistic that the working class would organise themselves into a revolutionary class.

In CAPITAL, VOLUME 1 Marx said:

Along with the constant decrease in the number of capitalist magnates, ..., the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation grows; but with this there also grows the revolt of the working class, a class constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of the capitalist process of production (p929 Penguin Ed. 1990).

In his mature writings, Marx saw capital accumulation caught in a trade cycle – an anarchic and systemic cycle of pain and misery moving through history while passing from one economic crisis to the next. Marx wrote:

"...capitalist production moves through certain periodical cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, overtrade, crisis and stagnation" (WAGES, PRICE AND PROFIT in Marx and Engels, SELECTED WORKS, volume 1, p. 440).

Capitalism is nothing more than a social system shot through with contradictions and conflict whose driving motor force is the class struggle. Unlike Professor Streeck, Marx never gave-up on the working class, believing that it had the potential "*to make history*".

It is just wishful thinking to believe capitalism will come to a grinding halt or collapse into entropy or remain in a state of permanent stagnation. Of course, nuclear accidents or nuclear war could wipe-out life on this planet as could irreparable environmental degradation, but that is not the point. Capitalism can only be ended consciously and

politically by the world's working class.

A more optimistic appraisal of capitalism than the one given by Professor Streeck is that the profit system will continue to accumulate capital, continue to expand value and continue to enrich a parasitical class of capitalists with all the social misery that entails until a socialist revolution takes place and a socialist majority replaces production for profit with production solely for social use.

Capitalism will not Collapse –“It is not so obliging”

Of course, we have been here before. There has been a long line of academics and politicians going back to the 19th century who have thought capitalism was about to collapse or stagnate. So, we find it odd that a scholar of Professor Streeck's standing did not include in his background reading the pamphlet WHY CAPITALISM WILL NOT COLLAPSE (1932), published by The Socialist Party of Great Britain. The SPGB put forward the following advice to the working class eighty-five years ago which is still relevant today:

The purpose of the Socialist Party is to show the working class the need for a complete alteration in the organisation of society. The basis of Capitalism is the private ownership of the land, the factories, the railways and the rest of the means of life. This is the root cause of poverty, insecurity and wars, and of a whole host of other evils. The remedy lies in making the means of production the common property of society. In other words, the working class must replace the existing social system, known as Capitalism, by a system of common ownership and democratic control, known as Socialism. But our work has been made more difficult by the idea that Capitalism may collapse of its own accord. It is clear that if Capitalism were going to collapse under the weight of its own problems then it would be a waste of time and energy to carry on socialist propaganda and to build up a real socialist party aiming at political power. If it were true, as is claimed, that Capitalism will have broken down long before it will be possible for us to win over a majority for the capture of political power, then, indeed, it would be necessary to seek Socialism by some other means. Workers who have accepted this wrong and lazy idea of collapse have neglected many activities that are absolutely essential. They have taken up the fatalistic attitude of waiting for the system to end itself. But the system is not so obliging!

The process of capital accumulation cannot guarantee a stable society but whoever thought it could; not Marx, nor subsequent socialists working within his theory of history, political concept of the class struggle and the labour theory of value. The working class, no matter how fragmented it currently is, will not disappear nor will the day-to-day problems workers face in a class divided society.

Socialism is still a practical and reasonable alternative to the problems created by capitalism. There has been no evidence that invalidates Marx's view that the working class is the last class in human history to free itself from exploitation and his more important proposition; that this emancipation has to be the work of the working class itself. Professor Streeck's pessimism about the ability of the working class to organise in its own class interest is misplaced as is his wishful thinking of capitalism's immanent collapse.

THE RUSSIAN DICTATORSHIP

The tragic side of the Russian experiment is the effect upon the workers and upon the Bolsheviks themselves. Faced with the many and difficult economic and political problems inseparable both from the Dictatorship and from the administration of a backward capitalist country, they have had to use violent means in order to retain power. In order to justify their actions they have described "State Capitalism" as "Socialism". Instead of teaching the principles of socialism and showing the workers what must yet be done before they can introduce social ownership of the means of production and distribution, the Bolshevik Government and Party have emulated the Labour leaders in Western Europe, who describe Nationalisation and Public Utility Corporations as Socialism. They have had to introduce the customary capitalist methods...Unable to eradicate the class conflict...(they) have dealt with it like Governments of capitalist States by resorting to imprisonment, suppression, exile and death.

The Russian Dictatorship from Questions of the Day, Socialist Party of Great Britain, p. 65, 1942

Crisis And Austerity Politics

AUSTERITY (2013) by Professor Mark Blyth is a useful book even though it is written by a convinced Keynesian economist.

Professor Blyth begins with the writings of Locke (SECOND TREATISE OF GOVERNMENT, 1690), David Hume (ESSAYS, MORAL AND LITERARY, OF PUBLIC CREDIT, II. IX. 5) and Adam Smith (THE WEALTH OF NATIONS, 1776), and traces the historical development of the economic doctrine known as ‘*economic liberalism*’ Justifying capitalism and the policy scripts written by financiers and economists for politicians and governments to address economic problems.

In a post-script to the book, Professor Blyth relates a story of the “*pre-ideological thinking*” of Francois Hollande, President of France, who justified French budget cutbacks in January 2014 by invoking Jean Baptiste Say’s erroneous ‘*truism*’ that supply creates its own demand (p. 272).

Professor Blyth rightly considers Hollande’s economic policy as an example of the “*bankruptcy of a political class*” Here we have a politician who invokes a failed 211 year-old economic doctrine without any historical reflection while still maintaining he is a “*socialist*”.

Well, it was Marx who refuted the so-called “*Say’s Law*” in the third chapter of CAPITAL, vOLUME 1 (Penguin 1990). It was in a section of the book where Marx was dealing with money or the circulation of commodities in the context of simple commodity production.

J. B. Say argued that a serious depression should not take place because “*every seller brings a buyer to market*”: by which he meant that every producer of commodities who sells his products then has the cash with which he can at once buy other products and so keep industry busy.

Marx was highly critical of Say's argument. He agreed, superficially, that the sellers have the cash with which they can go at once out and buy some other commodity, but he pointed out that:

“*...no one directly needs to purchase because he has just sold*” (pp 208-209).

The seller may choose not to do so and if the interval of time between the sale and the purchase is too great the result is “*...a crisis*” (p209).

The question to be answered then is why this failure to buy commodities takes place.

Say has disregarded the fact that part of capitalist expenditure which is investment (as distinct from the capitalists' purchase of necessities and luxuries for personal consumption) has as its sole purpose making a profit, and if there is no prospect that a profit can be made the capitalist refrains from buying although he has the means to buy.

When the 2008 economic crisis passed into a trade depression, the media pointed to numerous companies that had “*Cash Mountains*” of millions of dollars. In the US, for example, the mountain of cash in corporate vaults climbed to a record-high of \$1.4 trillion in 2014 (CNN NEWS March 20th 2015)

Instead of using this capital to produce more commodities these companies preferred to invest abroad, lend money to banks and the government (some cash was returned to shareholders). Also, at such times, many companies take over other firms - the strong kill the weak.

Using their surplus cash to provide jobs for the unemployed is not what the capitalists are in business to do.

When the economic conditions improved and there were prospects of making a profit, companies were only too willing to invest.

Some writers, like J.M. Keynes and his followers, have argued that there is an overall shortage of purchasing power in capitalist society and that this is the cause of crises and depressions. Major Douglas (infamous for his social credit proposals) proposed that the government should distribute to the population a cash “*national dividend*” to correct the supposed shortage.

Keynes maintained that this overall shortage of purchasing power made it impossible to sell all the products of industry in the home market, hence the pressure to sell abroad. And that if home demand is increased by the adoption of his proposals pressure to export would disappear and thus remove a major cause of war.

Of course the poor lack purchasing power, but the poor and rich combined always have the purchasing power to buy all the products. However, it must be remembered that capitalist production produces only for profit and the amount of commodities produced at any given time do not correspond with the real needs of the working class rationed, as they are, by the wages system.

Marx rejected underconsumptionist theories just as he was to reject the belief held by Say that capitalism was a harmonious system of commodity production and exchange for profit. The cause of crises was to be found in capitalism itself.

Marx made some acute observations about crises. He said that they were

“...never more than momentary, violent eruptions that re-establish the disturbed balance for the time being...the contradiction in this capitalist mode of production consists precisely in its tendency towards the absolute development of the productive forces that come into continuous conflict with the specific conditions of production in which capital moves, and can alone move (CAPITAL VOLUME 3, p. 357, 366)

The periodic failure of some products of industry to find buyers, which produces a crisis, is not due to any overall shortage of purchasing power but it is due to the anarchy of commodity production and exchange for profit; that is the contradictions and economic laws that bear on the movement of capital from one trade cycle to the next. As Marx noted:

“The true barrier to capitalist production is capital itself...If the capitalist mode of production is therefore a historical means for developing the material powers of production and for creating a corresponding world market, it is at the same time the constant contradiction between this historical task and the social relations of production corresponding to it” (CAPITAL VOLUME 3, Chapter 15, pp 358-359)

Austerity politics is what the working class get in an economic crisis and subsequent trade depression. Cuts in “welfare” payments, budget cuts to the NHS, wages and salaries pegged at 1% for government workers and so on. Yet, governments are only responding to economic events in the only way they know; in the interest of the capitalist class. But as Marx showed economic crises and trade depressions are only the manifestation of capitalism’s historical bankruptcy. Workers do not have to put up with the politics of austerity; they can take conscious and political action as socialists to democratically replace capitalism with socialism.

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Socialism, Robotics and Work

Surviving Artificial Intelligence

Over the past few years there has been an increased interest in Paul Lafargue’s pamphlet, “THE RIGHT TO BE LAZY” (1883).

www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/

One of the reasons why Lafargue's pamphlet is so popular again is because of the number of books, recently being published, stating that we are fast approaching a society that will be freed from employment through the use of artificial intelligence and robotics. A typical book putting this point of view is SURVIVING AI: THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (2016) by Calum Chace. In his book he quotes a report, published in September 2013 by the Oxford Martin School, which estimated that 45% of US jobs would disappear in the next 20 years (p.51).

Not to be outdone, Moshe Vardi, professor of computational engineering department at Rice University in Houston, Texas claims that the pace at which robots and intelligent machines are able to take over the jobs traditionally performed by humans will result in more than half the population being unemployed within 30 years (INDEPENDENT, 13th February 2013). Apparently 99% of call centre jobs will be lost in the coming years to the introduction of new technologies. More recently the Governor of the Bank of England stated, in a lecture at Liverpool University, that 15 million jobs in the near-future will be automated (TIMES, 14th December 2016).

Futurologists, like economists, have a track record for being wrong.

There was a report by The DAILY MAIL (16.7.73) of a statement made by Jack Peel, Director of Industrial Relations for the Common Market Commission, and formerly a trade union official. Mr Peel said:

"Well before the end of the century less than 50% of the population of working age will be working".

His prediction was utterly wrong. In the final decade of the 20th century there were, in the United Kingdom, some 27.8 million in work out of a potential working population of about 35 million.

Not to be outdone, Professor Stonier was reported in The TIMES (13.11.78) as giving evidence to the Government Central Policy Review Staff regarding future employment in which he said;

Within 30 years Britain will need no more than 10% of its labour force to supply all its material needs.

In 1980, under the heading of *"By 2001 only 1 in 10 may be working"*, The EVENING STANDARD reviewed a book by Professor Stonier. No critical analysis was given by the newspaper to Professor Stoner's preposterous claims. If the forecast had been correct and if unemployment had been rising from the 6% of 1978 to 90%, unemployment would now be 8 million and rising fast. It is in fact just under two million and has been falling for most months since the last economic depression.

However automation of factories is very real. More jobs in the US have been lost to automation than out-sourcing (Marshable.com, Jan. 19. 2017). Apple, for example, left the US and set up production in China because it cost \$40 to produce an iPhone in the United States and only \$4 in China. Workers in China work 12-16 hour shifts for pay of \$1 or less sleeping in dormitories with 15 beds in 12 x12 rooms (BUSINESS INSIDER, 22 January 2017).

Apple are now about to relocate production of iPads back to the US, not to employ workers though, but to set up a fully automated factory which will cost 40 cents to produce an i-Phone. Most of the job losses in the so-called *"rust-belt"* and other areas of the country were due to the introduction of automation, not corporations moving their factories abroad (*Trump Can't Deliver the Rust Belt Jobs He Promised Because Work Has Changed*, WIRED, October 20th 2016).

The whole question of the future of employment of wage-labourers' role in the production and distribution of commodities: - all this is now being questioned. But the issue of capitalism's replacement by socialism is left unquestioned by the mainstream consensus. The debate about employment and robotics is therefore taking place only within the continued framework of commodity production and exchange for profit – capitalism - not a social system like socialism where production and distribution will be directly for social use.

The current benefit of automation, in the form of profit, goes to the owners of the means of production and distribution, the capitalist class, not to society as a whole. The dystopian projection of a fully-automated society in which mass unemployment prevails takes place within a capitalist society not a socialist one.

Post-Capitalism?

One exception to the proliferation of capitalist dystopias around the future of employment over the past decade is the journalist, Paul Mason. In his book “POST CAPITALISM: A GUIDE TO OUR FUTURE”, Mason argues that capitalism is set to be replaced by ‘*post-capitalism*’ (not, we might add, by ‘*socialism*’).

Mason believes that capitalism is creating an abundance of information which will entail the collapse of many digitally-dependent markets sending prices to zero thereby leaving no profit. Mason believes that new technology will bring about the end of capitalism not a socialist revolution. Yet he offers no empirical evidence. Cost of production exist even in “*fully automated*” factories and so prices would not be zero. Fully automated factories have to be built and maintained. There are also depreciation/replacement costs to consider along with transport and distribution costs. If widgets are made by robots, by partly automated processes or by 100 per cent human labour, these other costs still need to be factored into the final ‘price’.

Mason believes this technological process is taking place now within capitalism, just as capitalism developed within feudalism but he has little grasp of the real historical process of capitalism’s genesis and initial political development which can be found in Marx’s CAPITAL. Mason’s book is a speculative and dystopian view of social change: a book of science fiction rather than science fact.

Outside the sharing of information, for example, production and distribution would still be owned by capitalists and directed for the purpose of making profit. Capitalism is not all about software and streaming information over the internet. Material things have to be made from raw resources, bits of natural material have to be formed to make buildings or cars and a pool of exploitable wage or salary workers have to be secured, educated and maintained to ensure this basic commodity production takes place. We do not live our lives in a weightless electronic world but a natural one. Mason may believe he has found a route away from capitalism but it is in fact a dead-end.

Mason’s mis-reading of Marx’s GRUNDISSE especially the section “*Fragment on Machines*” should also be noted as does the fact that it was a series of notebooks written by Marx during the winter of 1857-8 and never meant for publication. What Marx does say in the GRUNDRISSE, with respect to the development of machines and disposable time is that as capitalism progresses:

“...the more does it become evident that the growth of the forces of production can no longer be bound up with the appropriation of alien labour, but that the mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labour. Once they have done so, ..., then, on the one side necessary time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even though productive is now calculated for the wealth of all, disposable time will grow for all. For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals” (GRUNDRISSE, Notebook VII, p.708),

Marx believed this contradiction cannot be resolved in capitalism and will only become more and more pronounced. Only socialism, with its rational and democratic planning process, will be able to strike the right balance between the time society needs to produce all that is necessary to directly meet human needs and the time needed by all society to take part in the democratic day-to-day affairs of society. However, the politics of class consciousness and class struggle as well as the socialist party necessary for revolutionary change is totally absent from Mason’s technological and information-dependent “post-capitalism”.

Are Robots and Artificial Intelligence really a problem?

Technological progress through human history does not take place as a process in itself, as Marx was well aware. The change from feudalism to capitalism involved politics, revolution and civil war. Capitalism did not creep into history by softly-softly stealth, unnoticed until the first factories were constructed. Peasants were forced off the commons into the cities, slaves were sent to the plantations, and there were acts of rapacious greed, piracy, plunder and war. Capitalism, as Marx noted, came into being:

Dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt (CAPITAL, volume 1, p. 926, 1990)

And capitalism does not introduce new machinery, robotics and artificial intelligence for the sake of it. Marx stressed in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO that capitalism was a “*fetter*” on the forces of production (including social and co-operative labour). Capitalist relations of production, prevent the forces of production from being developed to meet the needs of all society. Under capitalism, capitalists and workers relate to the means of production as owners and non-owners respectively. The fundamental relationship is for capitalists to exploit workers by using the means of production to produce commodities for profit.

Marx repeated this remark again in the PREFACE TO THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY (1859) when he wrote:

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.

The real question to be asked is not about robotics and artificial intelligence but about the limitations of capitalism, the historical redundancy of commodity production and exchange for profit, and the control that socialism will give men and women over all their “*disposable time*” and what they chose to do with this “*disposable time*” within an association of free and voluntary labour: an association, “*in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all*” (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS, Socialist Party of Great Britain, p. 81).

However, this total control over our time requires a social revolution to free the “*forces of production*”: the means of production and distribution will not just fall into our laps. Only within socialism will all society be able to democratically determine what is produced, how it is produced, under what conditions it is produced and for whom.

Only a socialist revolution can begin to free the productive forces, including free social and co-operative labour, from the constraints imposed by capitalism. And the only political force which can liberate men and women from the power of capital is a socialist majority taking conscious and political action through a revolutionary political party with socialism and only socialism as its objective.

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Socialism Since 1889

What makes a Socialist?

During the 20th century, dictators, mass murderers, despots and political thugs referred to themselves, the regimes they controlled and the ideas and beliefs they proclaimed as “*socialist*”.

To give these political charlatans a degree of intellectual respectability, so-called left-wing academics, professors of philosophy, sociology, history, economics, anthropology and literature, produced book after book praising these political monsters and their dictatorships to the hilt.

In the production of “*fake news*” (Russia is ‘*socialist*’) and “*post-truth*” fiction writing (Lenin and the Bolsheviks are ‘*Marxists*’), these ‘professors’ and apologists made the alt-right and Donald Trump look like rank amateurs.

A typical example of this regrettable genre is “SOCIALISM SINCE 1889: A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY” (1989), written by the late James D. Young who was a lecturer in History at the University of Stirling.

Influenced by Hal Draper's "TWO SOULS OF SOCIALISM" (1966), Young gives a biographical sketch of a number of politicians, including Lenin and Trotsky, who he believed represented "*socialism from above*" rather than "*socialism from below*". However, there is no "*socialism from above*". Marx and Engels made this quite clear with reference to the First International:

On the foundation of the (First) International, we expressly formulated the battle cry: the liberation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. We consequently cannot go hand-in-hand with people who openly declare that the workers are too uneducated to liberate themselves, and must be liberated from above at the hands of the philanthropic big and petty bourgeois (quoted in Young p.43 from a letter written by Marx and Engels 17th to 18th Sept. 1879).

Lenin and Trotsky, (given by Young as examples of '*socialism from above*'), have no '*socialist*' credentials: quite the reverse if we accept Marx and Engels's comment on the liberation of the working class being "*the work of the working class itself*". Lenin, for example, believed that the working class, without intellectual leaders like himself to lead them, was not cut out for establishing socialism.

In his book "WHAT IS TO BE DONE?" (1902), Lenin discussed the idea that the workers would come to understand socialism. He said that there was a distinction between Social Democratic consciousness and trade union consciousness. He said that socialist ideas could not come from the working class. Socialist ideas could, he believed, only derive from the educated representatives of the propertied class; the "*intelligentsia*". The working class could only gain trade union consciousness and that was as far as they could go (see Panther ed. p. 80). And it was Lenin who said:

If Socialism can only be realised when the intellectual development of all the people permits it, then we shall not get Socialism for about 500 years". (Quoted in *TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD* (J. Reed p. 263).

This is contrary to the principle laid down by Marx and Engels in *The COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*:

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie to-day, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class (*The COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS*, Socialist Party of Great Britain, 1948, p.70).

Socialism can only be established by the working class itself, not from the elitist strategy, tactics and policy of politicians who happen to regard themselves as '*socialists*'.

H. M. Hyndman's Contempt for the Working Class

The only saving feature of Young's "SOCIALISM SINCE 1889" is the biographical sketch of Henry Mayers Hyndman (1842 – 1921), but only then to highlight why the founders of the Socialist Party of Great Britain rejected political leadership and why the SPGB urges workers to think and act democratically in their own class interest.

The turning-point of Hyndman's life came in 1880 when he discovered and read a French edition of volume one of Marx's *CAPITAL* and founded the Democratic Federation in 1881 (renamed the Social Democratic Federation in 1883).

Young states that:

"...the most interesting aspect of the quality of Hyndman's socialism was its authoritarianism, anti-working class elitism" (p. 41).

Hardly "*interesting*"! Political leadership has been a drag on the working class in consciously and politically rejecting capitalism and democratically organising for the establishment of socialism.

And Hyndman's autocratic elitism meant a life-long contempt for the working class. In 1900, for example, Hyndman wrote:

"I have often thanked my stars or my forebears that I was not born a working man. Very likely, if I had been I should have grown up just such another as the majority of my "intelligent" working men countrymen around me" (Trade Unions and Progress, Justice, 8th September 1900)

Young gives another quotation showing Hyndman's contempt for the working class. Following a meeting, sometime in 1909, with Georges Clemenceau, the French politician, Hyndman recalled:

I especially remember two things about this luncheon. Clemenceau would not have it that anything really valuable could come out of the English proletariat. They were incapable of any high ideals for their own class. "In short", he said, "la class ouvriere en Angleterre est une classe bourgeoise (the working class in England is a bourgeois class)"; and so far, I am compelled to admit, with the deepest regret this caustic appreciation of my toiling countrymen is in the main correct (The Record of an Adventurous Life, 1911).

Hyndman would have known at the time of his meeting with Clemenceau, of the existence of Socialist Party of Great Britain. Many of the founder members had been expelled from or had left the Social Democratic Party in 1904. These workers were able to set-up a socialist party with socialism as its only aim, around a set of socialist principles without the need of leaders like Hyndman. They also agreed with Marx and Engels that: *'the emancipation of the working class must be brought about by the working class themselves'*.

In 1920, Hyndman finally wrote-off the working class altogether:

So true is it that all history up to the present time has to be rewritten, and all the terrible facts of the past of the human race revealed in their true proportion, before we can hope to master the truth about the long martyrdom of man, from the break-up of the gentile and communal period, onwards, to the forms of private property production and exchange. In all this, for the most part, ethic has no say; human sympathy plays little or no part. For the mass of the people it is ever the same. Each generation in turn enters upon its mournful heritage of suffering, and passes on its burden of never-ending sorrow to the next, and the next, and the next (The Evolution of Revolution, 1920).

Hyndman, unlike the workers of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, supported British capitalism in the First World War.

Despite Hyndman's conservatism and authoritarianism, he still wrote useful articles on Marxian economics. The Economics of Socialism (1898), is still worth reading, particularly his argument against Jevon's utility theory of value, then being popularised by the Fabians in opposition to Marx's Labour Theory of Value. In the lecture: *"The final Futility of the Final Utility"*:

Hyndman noted:

Professor Jevons himself, I may note, made no distinction whatever between labour-power and labour. Yet labour-power is the value-creating commodity, which the capitalist buys, like other commodities on the market, and pays for in the form of money wages; and labour is the measure of the value of the commodities produced, in exchange with other commodities.

And he concluded:

Professor Jevons is markedly deficient. His analysis is absolutely worthless; his induction is loose and useless; his working hypothesis is "conspicuous by its absence"; having nothing to verify, his verification is unattempted; while forecast on his lines is utterly hopeless. The school of economists which has followed closely in his footsteps has been as barren of improvement or discovery as he was himself. Only when they have abandoned his crude and ill-digested commonplaces in favour of a widely different method, have his pupils done any good work whatever. The Final Futility of Final Utility is conclusively proved by the utter incapacity of any thorough-going Jevonian to give a reasoning explanation of the daily working of the capitalist system of production and exchange. Surely it is high time

that, at whatever expense to individual reputations, this involved and bootless theory should be generally recognised as the jumble of confusion which it is.

www.marxists.org/archive/hyndman/1896/economics/

However, in publishing the pamphlet “*Why Capitalism Will Not Collapse*” (1932), the SPGB repudiated Hyndman’s prophecy of capitalism’s cataclysmic end. Capitalism would not collapse. Likewise the hope Hyndman held all his adult life that he would become “the first Socialist Prime Minister” came to nothing.

Pretending the Socialist Party of Great Britain does not exist

One glaring omission in Young’s book is any reference to the Socialist Party of Great Britain. He cites all the other parties in existence at the turn of the nineteenth century and who described themselves as ‘*socialist*’ but not the SPGB. This is curious since he spends many pages in the chapter on Hyndman giving details of the ‘*impossiblist*’ Socialist Labour Party. However, he has to admit that “‘*the impossiblist revolt*’ was initiated and supported by working-class members of the SDF...” (p. 47), some of whom went on to establish the Socialist Party of Great Britain:

This did not stop Young from attacking founding members of the SPGB by lumping them together with the leadership of the SDF. He correctly attacks the SDF elitism:

“From 1883, when the SDF became committed to socialist principles, down to 1921 the members of the SDF adopted an elitist position which was out of alignment with Marx’s fundamental thesis that the workers had to emancipate themselves” (p. 445)

However, he chooses not to make it known that some members in the SDF did not think this way, certainly not those members who, from the turn of the twentieth century, began to criticise Hyndman and the SDF leadership both for their reformism and elitism. These former SDF members clearly agreed with Marx that the workers had to emancipate themselves and this is clearly seen in the following two clauses of the OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

4. That as in in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

This leaves Mr Young with an uncomfortable truth. In this country, the case for socialism has only been argued by those workers agreeing with and defending the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

The SPGB’s OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES has remained a clear, straightforward and concise statement setting out the working class position under capitalism, explaining why workers must organise into a socialist party, with only socialism, as its object in order to capture political power.

Mr Young might lament that by 1986 “...*international socialism was weaker than it had been during the heyday of the Second International between 1889 and 1914*” (p.236), but the rot had already set long before 1914 when most of the political parties associated with the Second International actively supported their respective countries in the First World War. The Second International pursued social reforms, let anyone join their organisation and had a leadership writing theory and policy not the membership as a whole.

We agree with Young only that there is no need to write a collective obituary for socialists and socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has never ‘*failed*’ and has survived despite all the political obstacles it has faced – the establishment and then failure of the reformist Labour Party and the rise and fall of the Bolshevik dictatorship to name but two.

The failures of the Labour Party are obvious: its sticking-plaster reforms to alleviate workers 'poverty', its opportunistic political alliances, its nationalisation and support for capitalism's wars. So too are the failures of those who supposed Lenin and Stalin's party had established socialism in state capitalist Russia. The Socialist Party of Great Britain remains the only socialist party in this country which has never supported capitalism's wars and never posed as "*leaders*" of the working class. After well over a century, the SPGB's sound socialist record deserves to be widely known and respected.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE VOTE

Today, almost all the countries in the world have votes for workers. In some countries, like Australia, far from depriving workers of the vote, the government makes voting compulsory. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, in its 1978 version of the pamphlet: Questions of the Day, offered the following statement about less developed countries. The workers:

"...besides trying to organise into a Socialist Party ought also to struggle to get the freedom to organise into trade unions and win elementary political rights. As in the advanced capitalist countries, however, this should still involve opposition to all other parties in order that the Socialist issue shall be kept free from confusion".

It should be remembered that the main difficulty confronting the socialist is not due to the conditions under which they operate, but in getting across socialist ideas to a non-receptive working class. In Britain and the US, where there is the franchise with little restriction on socialist meetings and publication of literature, socialists still face an enormous task. The forms of government are of a minor concern to socialists as indeed they are to the vast bulk of the working class who are more interested in jobs, wages and prices than in politics. The struggle to make capitalism more democratic with so-called political reforms is non-socialist and reformist, and cannot be supported by socialists as it deflects effort away from our objective – socialism.

The pre-requisite for Socialism is the struggle for working-class understanding of capitalism as a whole. That and that alone, is the political manifestation of the class struggle (SOCIALIST STUDIES No. 22 , *The SPGB and Reforms*, p. 22)

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Terrorists, Freedom Fighters, Refugees and Racists

March 2017 was an unhappy month. There was a Terrorist attack in Westminster, London. Four people were killed and the attacker was shot dead by the police. The poison of religion poisoned a susceptible mind to carry out death and destruction in the name of Islam. Although the jury is out on how someone could be radicalised to kill, the terrorist was most probably influenced when he briefly lived in Saudi Arabia or for a time in a British prison. Sadly, he will not be the last person to kill or be killed in the name of religion. All religions corrupt by imposing social control, particularly towards women, but some corrupt violently to further political interests.

The media, though, had a field-day. Five to six pages of coverage in the newspapers and hours of prime-time television devoted to the terrorist attack. There's this horrible double standard - car bombs, drones and fighter jets in Iraq and Syria killing hundreds at a time - that's normal. But a single terrorist attack in London is almost a state of emergency! The media always have a distorting effect on our perceptions and priorities. The terrorist attack in St Petersburg, for example, was buried deep within the Daily Telegraph for political reasons as was the DAILY MAIL's report on the verdict of the killing by a fascist of the Labour MP, Jo Cox, on page 30. Generally, though, for the media, acts of death and destruction mean profits. Good news does not sell. And there is precious good news to be found in capitalism.

The serial preachers of hate; Nigel Farage, sometime adviser to President Trump, along with Richard Littlejohn and Katie Hopkins of the DAILY MAIL were quick off the mark to use the terrorist attack in Westminster to suit their own political agenda. Predictably they vented their spleen against "*the Left*", "*multi-culturalism*", "*Muslims*",

"political correctness gone mad" and, of course, migrants. So too did the French Presidential candidate, Marie Len Pen and Poland's ultra conservative Prime Minister, Beata Szydlo with yet more racist remarks against migrants: the politics of hate.

As for the refugees, up to 260 were feared to have drowned in the Mediterranean on Wednesday the 23rd March after a rescue ship found two partially submerged dinghies drifting off the Libyan coast (TIMES 24th March 2010). The deaths of these refugees did not warrant front page news. The plight of refugees crossing the Mediterranean or stranded in Hungarian containers or hopelessly stuck on Greek islands are no longer newsworthy. And the plight of children refugees has been so cynically ignored by the UK government, in spite of the Dubs Amendment.

The war against terrorism in Iraq continued unabated. On the 20th March another car-bomb exploded in Baghdad killing 20 and wounding dozens (BBC NEWS). The US added to their own acts of terrorism by apparently killing nearly 200 civilians in Mosul. There was no apology from Trump (INDEPENDENT 24th March 2017).

Not as though previous Presidents have lost any sleep for their state terrorist actions. According to the LONG WAR JOURNAL, which follows US anti-terror developments, as of mid-2011, the drone strikes in Pakistan since 2006 had killed 2,018 insurgents and 13, 800 civilians. An attack by the US in December 2013, in a wedding procession in Yemen, killed 12 men and wounded at least 15 other people, including the bride.

And according to a report in The Bureau of Investigative Journalism:

There were ten times more air strikes in the covert war on terror during President Barack Obama's presidency than under his predecessor, George W. Bush. Obama embraced the US drone programme, overseeing more strikes in his first year than Bush carried out during his entire presidency. A total of 563 strikes, largely by drones, targeted Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen during Obama's two terms, compared to 57 strikes under Bush. Between 384 and 807 civilians were killed in those countries, according to reports logged by the Bureau.

<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-17/obamas-covert-drone-war-in-numbers-ten-times-more-strikes-than-bush>

The US and its allies are now poised to take Raqqa from Isis. Syria will then be divided between two superpowers, Russia and the US governments and their respective proxy factions. The conflict over raw resources like oil, strategic spheres of influence and the protection of trade routes will continue.

Former IRA commander, Martin McGuinness, was also buried in March. Speaking at the graveside, the Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams, insisted that Mr McGuinness was *"not a terrorist"* but *"a freedom fighter"* (INDEPENDENT, March 24th 2017). Freedom for whom?

Not freedom for the working class of Northern Ireland. During the so-called troubles, the Socialist Party of Great Britain opposed the nationalism of the IRA, its terrorism and violence. The Socialist Party of Great Britain also criticised the policies of various governments of Westminster and Stormont.

Socialists do not take sides in conflicts between sections of the ruling class and of those groups wanting to become a ruling class. Socialists do not support nationalist struggles. Instead, we advised workers in Northern Ireland and elsewhere that they should unify around class interests not nationalist interests. What has the Good Friday Agreement done for the working class of Northern Ireland? They are still an exploited class living in poverty.

All that has happened is that Sinn Fein now administers capitalism in Northern Ireland in the interests of the capitalist class. And as former President Clinton, with tears in his eyes, praised in his eulogy, Martin McGuinness the *"freedom fighter"*, at his funeral, we should not forget that it was as President of the United States that Clinton ordered a cruise missile attack on a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, North Sudan on 20th August 1998, killing one employee and wounding seven. There was no five page coverage in the US media of the dead worker. And it was much later that the US admitted:

"...that the evidence that prompted President Clinton to order the missile strike on the Shifa plant was not as solid as first portrayed. Indeed, officials later said that there was no proof that the plant had been manufacturing or storing

nerve gas, as initially suspected by the Americans, or had been linked to Osama bin Laden, who was a resident of Khartoum in the 1980s." (THE NEW YORK TIMES, October 20th 2005)

No-one refers to Bill Clinton as a terrorist!

In the US there was a recent terrorist attack which barely went reported. A white US army veteran stabbed to death a black man in a prelude to a “*race war*”. He had harboured feelings of hatred towards black men for at least ten years. No comment by Trump for this type of terrorism.

But then Trump is supported by white nationalists. They find an outlet for their hatred on the BREITBART News Network: a far-right US opinion and commentary website for white supremacists, misogynists, homophobes, “*white nationalists*”, “*patriots*” and armed-to-the-teeth survivalists. BREITBART was founded in 2007 by the late Andrew Breitbart to make fascism “*sexy*” and, until recently, it was controlled, by Trump’s close political advisor, Stephen Bannon.

These merchants of hate take their cue from the novel, THE TURNER DIARIES, written by the neo-Nazi William Pierce in 1978. The novel depicts a violent revolution in the US which leads to the overthrow of the federal government, nuclear war, and, ultimately, a race war which kills all groups vilified by the author, such as, Jews, gays, blacks and socialists. The novel was considered, rightly, by one critic as a fascist’s wet dream. And one of the consequences of this particularly nasty political hatred was the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma, on April 19, 1995. Carried out by two White Nationalists, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nicholas, the bombing destroyed one-third of the building and killed 168 people, and injured more than 680 other. McVeigh was found carrying pages from the novel when he was arrested(
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/how-the-turner-diaries-changed-white-nationalism/500039/>).

The politics of hate forms a background to the politics of the present growth in a spurious politics of national identity, nationalism and nationalist superiority. Aggressive nationalism forms the world-view of Trump’s and Putin’s Presidencies and the victorious UKIP and Tory Brexiteers in the UK with their dreams of a Mark 2 British Empire. Already elements in the Tory Party are looking at forcibly protecting Gibraltar if the Spanish Government invades. The rise of Nationalism has all the ingredients of being a very an ugly 21st century.

As with all nationalist politics, there has to be someone to blame and hate: the Mexican immigrant, Syrian refugees, or just other workers from Poland, Romania or Bulgaria. Nationalism is the politics of ignorance and hate. And there are also socialists to blame as “*The enemy within*”. Capitalism is a world of conflict, violence, destruction and war. The effects of capitalism require the urgent need for the establishment of Socialism. Socialism cannot be founded on violence and socialism. Socialism requires a socialist majority to democratically take political power. The antidote to the politics of hate is class unity and the establishment of socialism.

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Is Capitalism Abolishing Poverty?

FORBES magazine and the hundreds of free market institutes have long claimed that global capitalism is reducing poverty. They have now been joined by Mr and Mrs Gates of The Gates Foundation, who have agreed with this benign view of the profit system. It is all smoke and shadows. In an article in Human Sphere by Martin Kirk and Jason Hickel published on the 20th March 2017, we are told that the figures used by the Gates Foundation are spurious. World poverty has not been cut by half as they claim. Like the pro-capitalist FORBES Magazine, the Gates Foundation uses outdated figures based on a \$1.25 a day poverty line. They authors of the report state:

A more accurate poverty line is \$5 per day, which, even the U.N. Agency for Trade and Development suggests this is the bare minimum necessary for people to get adequate food to eat and to stand a chance of reaching normal life expectancy. Global poverty measured at this level hasn’t been falling. In fact, it has been increasing – dramatically – over the past 25 years. Today, more than 4 billion people live below this minimum threshold. That’s nearly two-

thirds of the world's population. The Gates' would be wise to reflect on this fact, for it is a clear sign that the development industry is failing at its main objective.

Even the World Bank – hardly a socialist organisation - has been forced to revise its figures on absolute poverty.

A similar argument was put by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in the 1950s against, what they erroneously believed, was Marx's theory of "*The immiserisation of the working class*", in an attempt to show capitalism in a good light. The IEA claimed that, following the industrial revolution, wages steadily increased during the 19th century. They left out of the equation both the impact of the trade cycle and the growth of the trade unions. Now trade unions are less effective than they once were, wages and salaries have gone up very little in what is supposed to be a booming economy. To get by, most household have to receive two incomes. Child poverty is increasing. Government workers have been forced to take a 1 percent pay increase but inflation is running at 2.5 percent while millions of workers have to have more than one job or persist in the gig economy. Always be sceptical of statistics, where they come from and what they are being used for.

Socialists argue that poverty is caused by the working class's inability to produce and distribute goods and services in common and under democratic control. Only the establishment of socialism can get rid of this very real poverty along with the absolute poverty currently suffered by four billion people in the world today. Capitalism is the problem not part of the solution. The capitalist class, philanthropic or not, are also part of the problem and not the solution.

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The Class War and Capitalism's Wars

Our world is one of never-ending wars. Currently there are wars and conflicts in many countries of the Middle East: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya; in the Indian sub-continent over Kashmir; in many parts of Africa; and potential conflicts brewing in South America, Asia, and even Western Europe. The world's longest running war still continues in the 'armed truce' between North and South Korea, more than half a century after the Korean War was brought to a stop. This relic of the post-1945 Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA still persists long after the Cold War officially ended, and long after the Soviet Union was dissolved. And now Trump and Kim, a client of China, threaten each other aggressively with all-out thermonuclear war, like teenagers playing a dangerous game of Chicken or Dare.

In many wars and civil wars, the conflicting interests of the 'Great Powers' have led to 'proxy wars'. Given the overwhelming size of the Russian and American nuclear arsenals, the Cold War stand-off made their deterrence policy – Mutually Assured Destruction, nicknamed MAD – far too suicidal and dangerous for a head-on confrontation. So the whole world became their battleground as a series of 'proxy wars' have been fought out by a number of client states using weaponry and other military support from the Big Powers.

Korea is a case in point. In 1949-1950 when the Korean War was starting, the United Nations Commission reported (Sept. 1949) that the major cause of the conflict was "*the worldwide antagonism between the Soviet Union and the USA*" (the SPGB pamphlet THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, 1950, p95). On both sides politicians argued their real concern was for peace – it was always the other side who were the aggressors.

When we turn to the statements of the Governments and parties justifying their attitude on the Korean war we see on all sides how high-sounding pacific sentiments can serve as a cover for the determination to wage war where capitalist interests are at stake. They are all against war, but... The American and British [Labour] Governments are in the war because, so they say, unless they stop Russian aggression now a third world war is inevitable. "By accepting this fresh challenge he had every hope that a world war could be averted. That was the only way to preserve peace" (Mr. Herbert Morrison... Times July 3rd 1950). To which the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Gromyko, retorts:- "The U.S. Government ... demonstrated that, far from seeking to consolidate peace, it is, on the contrary, an enemy of peace... The U.S Government ... is gradually impelling the country step by step towards open

war.” (Daily Worker, July 5th 1950).
THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, 1950, pp96-7

That first Korean War also showed up the futility of expecting the United Nations to guarantee peace: “*No event of the post-war years has so forcibly exposed the illusion of abolishing war through the United Nations*” (THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, p. 95). In a chapter on *Futile Efforts to Prevent War* (p55), we argued that:

The Governments that meet in United Nations have behind them national capitalist groups which have real and vital conflicts of interest. The conflict does not disappear when they get together in a large group any more than when the diplomats of rival Powers get together in a small group.

The devastated cities of Syria, the disastrous Iraq wars; Afghanistan and Libya; the millions of hapless refugees: the consequences of US militaristic reactions to the 9/11 terrorist attacks have contributed to political instability and increased nationalism and authoritarianism in the US and Europe. Putin’s policies in Chechnya, Georgia and most recently in eastern Ukraine indicate a return to the Soviet era post-war ‘sphere of influence’ is likely, so the Baltic states like the Ukraine have drawn closer to the US and Nato.

The War of Words

It may be that the most deadly weapons of all are words: the propaganda which justifies warfare as being an inevitable heroic struggle between the forces of Good against Evil. For instance:

Quoting a declaration by the Bishop of Rochester about the need “to fight Godless materialism with aggressive evangelism”, the DAILY MAIL (July 3rd 1950) had the following in a leading article:- “In those six words he summed up the reason for the war in Korea. In every war the Right is on your side – whoever you may be – and the Wrong is on the other... We are engaged in a fight of Christian civilisation against Communist materialism...” (THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, p98).

As we argued in a more recent pamphlet WAR AND CAPITALISM (1996, 2000, 2005), the real reasons and causes of a war have nothing to do with the rhetoric and political propaganda used to justify it:

... politicians who claim that a war is a just one because it is about freedom and democracy are simply not to be believed. Democracy is not something they would go to war about. If that were the case, how come there are so many dictatorships in the world? Instead of going to war, capitalist governments are much more likely to sell them weapons.

Every war it seems can be justified. Arguments used include the claim that this war is ‘self-defence’ – but Socialists argue the working class have no country to defend. Or about ‘freedom and democracy’ – but these cannot be defended by bombs and bullets. Or the ‘other side’ are evil monsters for using banned weapons, such as chemicals and nerve gas like sarin – the US used napalm and dioxins (Agent Orange) in Vietnam, and DU (depleted uranium) in Iraq. The US remains the only state to have dropped atom bombs on cities (Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 1945). Genocide or ‘ethnic cleansing’ has been commoner than the UN would have expected – think of the Partition of post-war India, the expulsion of Palestinians from the new state of Israel, the Serb-Croat conflicts of Yugoslavia in the 1970s, etc.

The well-meaning diplomats at the UN try to draw up and enforce rules for conducting warfare in a more or less civilised manner. But when war is involved it seems that ‘Queensberry rules’ just cannot be enforced. Even international agreements banning torture are brushed aside, as at Guantanamo, the notorious US offshore prison.

The only real answer to war rhetoric is working class class-consciousness. With this comes the knowledge that wars are not fought in our interests, and that the world over the working class has a common interest in ending capitalism and establishing Socialism.

The link – competition, waste and war

Over 100 years ago, William Morris explained in a lecture HOW WE LIVE AND HOW WE MIGHT LIVE (1884), of how capitalism's commercial and business competition was the real cause of international wars.

... understand that our present system of Society is based on a state of perpetual war... it is this war of the firms which hinders the peace between nations...

POLITICAL WRITINGS OF WILLIAM MORRIS, ed. A L Morton, 1979

Only by understanding how we are exploited through the wages system can workers unite and work for the overthrow of this wasteful and war-mongering capitalist system. To put an end to wars we need to get rid of the cause of wars – *i.e.* the worldwide competition between capitalist firms and between rival nation-states, and the exploitation of the world's workers in this system of production for profit.

As we argued in 1950 (SPGB pamphlet THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, p. 94), and as we had argued in 1914 and 1939, and too many times since:

War can solve no working class problem. It cuts across the fundamental identity of interest of the workers of the world, setting sections of this class at enmity with each other in the interests of sections of the capitalist class. Socialism is completely opposed to war and to what war represents. At the same time it is the only solution to the conditions that breed war... coercion does not solve problems but only breeds fresh ones, and war is an attempt to coerce. Above all war is one of the means employed by the ruling class to maintain their privileged position at the expense of the subject class.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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